

**Senator John  
HOEVEN**

**Senator Kent  
CONRAD**

**Congressman Rick  
BERG**

**Governor Jack  
DALRYMPLE**

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September 2, 2011

The Honorable J. Randolph Babbitt  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Babbitt,

As the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) moves forward with the challenge of integrating Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) into the National Airspace (NAS), we want to ensure that North Dakota remains at the forefront of that effort.

As you know, North Dakota has a strong existing infrastructure for UAS operations, including Air Force assets at the Grand Forks Air Force Base, Customs and Border Protection flying missions also based out of Grand Forks, and a nationally-renowned UAS Center of Excellence at the University of North Dakota. We also offer some of the least congested airspace in the nation, and a unified coalition of stakeholders who will support the FAA in its efforts to fully integrate UAS into the North Dakota airspace. As a result, we believe North Dakota is uniquely situated to be a primary test site for the FAA in the integration of UAS into the NAS – one that could serve as a model to be deployed nationally after being proven in North Dakota.

We have been aggressively working to bring this vision to fruition through the Red River Valley Working Group and the Congressional delegation's efforts over the past two Congresses to authorize UAS integration pilot projects in the FAA Reauthorization Act. At the same time, a diverse group of stakeholders has formed to ensure that the private sector and relevant state and local officials in North Dakota speak with one voice on UAS issues. This group is working to develop a plan for a North Dakota UAS integration pilot project for FAA approval and would serve as a resource to the FAA as plans for UAS operations in North Dakota move forward. The North Dakota UAS Airspace Integration Team represents the aviation community (including military, commercial, and general aviation, and the North Dakota Aeronautics Commission), the University of North Dakota, the North Dakota National Guard, local and state economic development officials, and a number of private companies. We have enclosed a list of the team members who can serve as a resource for the FAA as you work to integrate UAS into the NAS.

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We believe the North Dakota UAS Airspace Integration Team can provide the FAA with technical expertise through this process and help ensure that a pilot project in North Dakota continues to have support across the spectrum of affected interests. As such, we believe it would be useful for you and your UAS team to meet with the Integration Team and respectfully request that you convene a meeting with the group in the near future. Senator Hoeven's chief of staff, Don Larson, will be contacting your office to follow up on this letter and arrange the details of the meeting. Don can be reached at (202) 224-2551.

Again, we strongly believe North Dakota is ideally situated to lead the way on UAS integration. North Dakota has top subject matter experts with deep experience in UAS development and operations, unified support from the aviation community, and the necessary airspace, climate diversity, and open terrain to safely test UAS integration. We look forward to continuing to work with you to make North Dakota the first state to successfully pilot the integration of UAS into the NAS.

Sincerely,



KENT CONRAD  
United States Senator



JOHN HOEVEN  
United States Senator



RICK BERG  
United States Representative



JACK DALRYMPLE  
North Dakota Governor

Enclosure

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### **North Dakota UAS Airspace Integration Team Members**

Brigadier General (Ret.) Al Palmer  
Director, University of North Dakota UAS Center of Excellence  
North Dakota National Guard Representative

Maynard Herting  
Industry Expert

John Walker  
SeaTec; Former FAA Program Director of Airspace

Larry Taborsky  
North Dakota Aeronautics Commission

Cindy Beck  
North Dakota Aeronautics Commission

Josh Simmers  
North Dakota Department of Commerce

Carol Goodman  
Cavalier County Economic Development